

Martin Read Foundation annual Festival of contemporary music *Came Home* to Alton on Sunday 7th May with '*a great day, a-buzz with creativity, talent, friendship and fun!!*'



L-R back: Joseph Spooner, Simon Speare, Ali Willis, Beccy Read, Alton Deputy Mayor, Anna Longhorn; front: Ryan Hawkes, Sam Carr, Lavender Rodriguez & Owen Russell.

All great composers have studied with others who are more established, and this is one of the aims of this Foundation in its support of young composers, filling the gap in provision available at local level. The other aim is to explore and discover contemporary music, involving musicians from across the community, amateur, professional and student.

After 3 successful annual events held at Farnham Maltings, this year Alton College welcomed it's return *Home*, to where Martin inspired countless young musicians in his 23 years as Head of Music. *In residence* this year were the Broncano-Mnich duo, clarinet & piano and Joseph Spooner, cello who gave inspiring premieres of commissions submitted by this year's selected young composers: Oren, Sam, Owen, Lavender and Ryan, in the first of 2 concerts. Alton's Deputy Mayor, Councillor Dean Philips, later presented certificates to the 5 young composers. One such composer, Owen Russell, student at South Downs College wrote: *a huge thanks for all of the help the Foundation has given me - it has made a massive difference to me as a composer, and has inspired me to continue writing...*

Joseph also performed a work by Ellen Drewe, MRF alumna '16, whose Foundation commission was short-listed for BBC Young Composer of the year. Rebeca Omordia joined Joseph in sumptuous works by John Ireland, Eric Fogg and Matthew Taylor - who is also one of the Foundation's mentors. The afternoon finishes with Broncano-Mnich and lively, at times experimental pieces by Widmann and Milhaud. After picnics in the warm spring sunshine, the audience were treated to performances *from scratch* of a highly unusual flavour: Martin's political Squeaking & Honking for big band & strings with voice samples of American Presidential speeches, made topical in this the time of Trump; Michael Nyman's infectious score for the Draughtsman's Contract; and Martin's Hampshire Folksong for chorus and jazz group confirmed the Home-Coming. There were also premieres by 2 of Martin's ex-students, dedicated to him: Andy Light's *Thank You*, performed with great vitality - Eggars percussionists joining those from the College; and Gwyneth Herbert's exquisite Letter Song for Martin - *More of Everything*.

On an appropriate pedestal in the programme sat *Svyati* - Taverner's stunning spiritual work for chorus and solo cello, Joseph reducing the audience to concentrated silence for the final stratospheric note, *pp*.

Congratulations to the Martin Read Foundation for such a memorable Festival, especially to Joseph Spooner - cello and Trustee, David Gibson - conductor and Beccy Read, Trustee, for one of the best events ever. It is so excellent to witness this Foundation growing year on year. It truly is the platform for the continuation of Martin's musical energies and passions.